

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. Process for the preparation of 2-phenylbenzimidazole-5-sulphonic acid, comprising reacting 3,4-diaminobenzenesulphonic acid at a  
5 pH between 4 and 7 in aqueous solution with 0.9 to 1.5 mol of benzaldehyde per mole of 3,4-diaminobenzenesulphonic acid and with 1.0 to 3.0 mol of SO<sub>2</sub> per mole of 3,4-diaminobenzenesulphonic acid, or an agent which comprises 1.0 to 3.0 mol of SO<sub>2</sub> per mole of 3,4-diaminobenzenesulphonic acid.  
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2. Process according to Claim 1, characterized in that 3,4-diaminobenzenesulphonic acid obtained by sulphonation of 1,2-diaminobenzene is used.
- 15 3. Process according to Claim 1, characterized in that the reaction is carried out at a pH in the range from 5 to 7.
4. Process according to Claim 1, characterized in that the benzaldehyde is used in an amount of from 1.05 to 1.1 mol/mol.  
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5. Process according to Claim 1, characterized in that the reaction is carried out at a temperature in the range from 25° to 130°C.
- 25 6. 2-phenylbenzimidazole-5-sulphonic acid obtained according to Claim 1 which is lightened by means of treatment with an oxidizing agent.

7. A process for preparing cosmetic preparations comprising incorporation 2-phenylbenzimidazole-5-sulphonic acid obtained according to Claim 1.